



A Progressive Approach in Redeveloping Waterfront Property

When speaking with Mayor John Fogg or City Manager Tom Bonfield, it is easy to see why Pensacola, Florida is proud of what it has and will accomplish.

For both Fogg and Bonfield, Pensacola will increasingly be a showcase community for other cities with significant waterfront property and the need for redevelopment.

Information about this project was obtained during a filming by the crew from the Urban Waste Management & Research Center (UWMRC) for the upcoming "Our Urban Environment." This series will feature interviews and footage from across the US on Brownfields redevelopment projects. The title of the series is "Reclaiming America's Cities."

Working with the Trust for Public Land (TPL), the City of Pensacola has cleaned up a 30-acre tank storage site near downtown with an eye toward increasing green spaces. The old site was home to many industries since the 1800s. In recent times, the site had become a dumping ground across the street from City Hall.

That is until Jennifer Fleming, Executive Director for the Community Redevelopment Authority and Greg Chelius, State Director for TPL, began their multi-year effort to bring a park to downtown Pensacola and restore the environmental quality of the polluted property. According to both the City and the TPL, the issue was public involvement.

In a recent interview with Fleming and Chelius, the process involved in the clean up was described as including public hearings, marketing studies and focus groups. These activities included people from business and industry, regulators, citizen groups, neighborhood associations, and property developers.

"We have interviewed many people during this project," said series producer and director Dr. John W. Sutherlin, "but for a community of this size to go to these lengths was important to document. They could serve as a model for medium to small cities for Brownfields redevelopment and community involvement."

Such project spotlights are essential for the series, as there are many more Brownfields projects to be conducted in the smaller cities than in the larger ones. Groups like the TPL offer assistance to communities looking to increase their parks and recreation facilities.

Over the next several months, the City of Pensacola and its citizens will make decisions about exactly how to develop this property. While it was clear from the interviews conducted with developers that they would like to see more commercial development, the City and the TPL has other ideas.

Both Fleming and Chelius spoke about the need for additional recreational and festival capacity for the city that could be realized on this waterfront property.

Although there are clearly some obstacles remaining for the redevelopment of this property, the City appears poised for significant revitalization over the next few years.